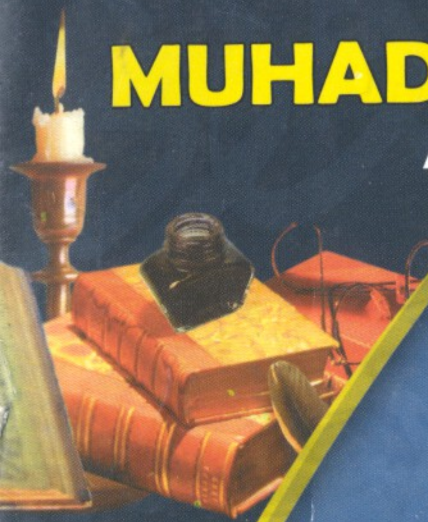


MUHADDITH SURTI

AN ERUDITE OF MODERN MUSLIM INDIA

By:

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The Ulama from the very advent of Islam in the Indian Sub-Continent held a very important place in the Muslim society. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said "The learned people or persons (Ulama) among my people resemble the Prophets of Israel". This saying reflects the role and the importance of Ulama but it certainly does signify that Ulama hold the position of the Prophet or they are the messengers of God. Thus Ulama of the Muslim Ummah resemble in their stature the Prophets of Israel. They are the defenders and custodians of the Prophet's teachings, the sanctity of the Holy Quran and the moral values of the Islam.

As predicated by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the Muslim Ulama assumed the role of guides after the demise of the Prophet (PBUH). History is replete with so many examples and evidences when the Ulama stood staunchly to safeguard the Muslim interests. Ulama also rendered monumental services in this respect in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent.

During the Mogul period when Emperor Jalaluddin Akber was trying to alter the fundamental principals of Islam, Sheikh Ahmed of Sirhind popularly known as Mujaddid Alif Thani (1562-1624) became furious with this extra Islamic tendencies of Islam and opposed with courage and became the real soldier of the Islam and of God.

In A.D. 1759 same steps were taken by Shah Waliullah, Muhaddith Dehlvi (1703-1764) in Northern India when the Marhatas and Jats had become so aggressive that life and property of the Muslims were no longer safe. Although there are innumerable examples depicting the boldness of Ulema in the Muslim history, but it was during the last decade of the

declining Moghul empire when Ulema assumed the role of an Iron Wall.

Particularly in A.D.1857 they took active part in holding back the formidable control of the British occupation in the Sub-Continent. Haji Imadadullah Mahajir Makki, Mufti Sadruddin Azurda, Allama Fazl-i-Haq Khaiabadi, Mufti Inayat of Kacorvi, Mulana Rehmatullah Keranvi and Maulana Faiz Ahmed Badauni were the chief motivators of the jihad movement against the British power. Although they faced miserable situation after the complete downfall of the Mughul emperors, but they always remained faithful to Islamic doctrine.

Maulana Wasi Ahmed Muhaddis Surti was also an able exponent of this movement. His father, Maulana Mohammad Tayaib and his ancestors actually migrated from Iraq during the period of Mughal emperor Shah Jehan and settled in Surat. 5/ Maulana Mohammad Tayaib, being a religious personality of Surat took an active part in the fight against the British officials who looked upon India as a land of treasure and wanted to occupy it. In the town of Randier where he had built a mosque and led prayers as the imam and khateeb, he opened a camp for Mujadhidins and organized a force, but the British officials were more armed. They also succeeded in gaining sympathies of the local Hindu population who subjugated them by offering goods and lucrative employment in their trade organisations. It was a very frustrating and critical situation for Maulana Mohammad Tayaib but he accepted the challenge to meet the situation. When he got news of the British soldiers who were posted in Randier, he mastered some force and a serious clash took place Maulana Tayaib suffered heavy losses.

British soldiers shot down his two sons and many companions. After this clash, Randier was surrounded by the British soldiers completely and there was no other choice for Maulana Tayaib except to surrender or migrate to Hijaz. 6/

So, he decided to migrate to Hijaz. When he reached Madina, along with his family, he performed Hajj and made this Holy city his abode for nearly two years.

In A.D. 1860 when general amnesty was announced in India, Maulana Tayaib made his mind to return to his homeland, but due to his failing health he could not reach India and died in Jeddah. But he had already discussed future plans with his elder son Maulana Wasi Ahmed, who was at that time about twenty years old and advised him on relevant matters. Maulana Wasi Ahmed returned to India with his mother and his younger brother Maulana Abdul Latif and again settled down in Surat. 7/ His mother died due to old age. This was a very shocking incident for him, but it helped him to make a final decision and consequently he left Surat forever.

In A.D. 1857 Maulana Wasi Ahmed was a student of Dars-i-Nizami. He wanted to complete his syllabus and acquire knowledge of religion in order to become a real scholar he proceeded to Delhi, where some Ulama were engaged in teaching Hadith and Tafsir. At that time there was an eminent religious scholar Mufti Muhammad Masood Muhaddith Delhelvi in Masjid Fathehpuri, and teaching the students. Maulana Wasi Ahmed met him and sought advice to restart his education. Mufti Masood guided him and he took admission in Madrasa-i-Hussain Bakhsh 8/ and resumed his studies but after few months he proceeded to Kanpur and joined Madrasa-i-Faiz-i-Aam in Kanpur, 9/ where Maulana Lutfullah Aligarhi (1828-1916) was the principal. Maulana Lutfullah was one of the renowned religious scholars of the Sub-Continent and it was here that Maulana Wasi Ahmed achieved deep and penetrating knowledge. He was a meticulous student of Hadith and Tafseer, and had a deep insight into the Islamic epics and mythology. In A. D. 1871 he completed all examination and according to the wish of

Maulana Mufti Lutfullah (1828-1916) joined the same Madrasa in the capacity of a junior teacher. 10/

In A.D. 1877 he went to Saharanpur where Maulana Ahmed Ali Suharanpuri (1807-1879) was busy in teaching Hadith. He was one of the most brilliant student of Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824) and Shah Ishaq (Died 1862), and known as the last Muhaddith of Sub-Continent. Maulana Wasi Ahmed knelt down in front of him and read few potions of Hadith. 11/ In those days both Pir Syed Meher Ali Shah of Golra Sharif (1859-1937) and Maulana Syed Dedar Ali Alwari (1857-1935), founder of Hizbul Ahnaf, Lahore, were also student of Saharanpur. 12/

It is essential to mention here that before proceeding to Saharanpur Maulana Wasi Ahmed had met the great Spiritualist and divine Hazrat Shah Fazle Rehman Gungmuradabadi (1791-1896) who was also a student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlvi and disciple of Hazrat Shah Afaq Mujaddidi Naqshbandi (1160-1251). Maulana Wasi Ahmed who believed in Shari'ah and Tasawwuf, found deep satisfaction, attachment and peace of soul in the deliberations and the behavior of Shah Fazle Rehman, so he did his Baiat on his hand. 13/And after due time Shah Fazle Rehma awarded him khilafat of Qadri, Chishti and Mujjadaddi and Naqsbandi order in Tariqah.

Muhaddith Saharanpuri was one of the admirers of Shah Fazla Rahman, so he gave special attention to Maulana Wasi Ahmed who had already written the annotations on Sunnan Nisai an authentic compilation of Hadith. After months of observation and discussion on several related to Hadith with Maulana Wasi Ahmed, Muhaddith Saharanpuri apprised him a certificate of honour, predicting that you will be the savior of Hadith in India. 14/ This forecast of Muhaddith Saharanpuri became true when in A. D. 1877. Maulana Wasi Ahmed on the advice of Sheikh Hazrat Fazle

Rehman opened a school of Hadith at Pillibhitt, a renowned city of the Rohelkand and the first capital of Hafiz Rehmat Khan Rohila. It is worth mentioning here that Maulana Wasi Ahmed had a very close relationship with the great spiritual divine of Ahl-e-Sunnat and renowned scholar Maulana Ahmed Rida Khan Fadil-e Barailwi, So he invited Maulana Ahmed Rida Khan in the inauguration of Madrasatul Hadith. At this occasion Fadhil-e Barailwi not only gave some lessons to the student, but also gave a lecture on the importance of ilm-e-Hadith for the rebuilding of Muslim Society and the culture. The name of his school was "Madrassatul-Hadith". This was the first Institution specifically teaching Hadith in the area. The news of the opening of this Institution spread in all corners of India and in few month's time hundreds of pupils rushed to Pillibhitt for acquiring the knowledge of Hadith and Fiqah under the auspicious guidance of Maulana Wasi Ahmed.

Maulana Wasi Ahmed remained in Pillibhitt until his death and taught Hadith for about forty years. He wrote several books and edited well-known books of Hadith like Tirmidhi, Abu-Daud, Sunann Nissai, Mawatta of Imam Mohammad and Tahavi. 15/ Besides, he also wrote a comprehensive annotation on Munyatul-Mussally, a famous books of Fiqah, 16/. It is indeed heartening to note that Maulana Wasi Ahmed's fatawa Izhar-i-Shariat and other compilations are consulted in religious school even today. Thus he contributed a good deal of religious literature and opens a new vista for research study both by Muslim and non-Muslims scholars.

The services of Maulana Wasi Ahmed are multi-dimensional and everlasting. He followed the political Philosophy of Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlvi (1703-1764) and as a result his certificate of Hadith was a close evidence to this fact. So he felt pride in doing so. The fact remains that he never came out with his political beliefs which might be a

guide because he wanted a very constructive change in the society - a change which is in line with the principles of the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Thus, he tried to concentrate on religious education and succeeded in creating awareness among his students. Although he was the founding member of Nadwa-tu-Ulema, 17/ but during the second session at Lucknow he refrained from taking part in the activities of this organization due to hitherto unknown reasons it could have jeopardized the religious harmony of the Muslim community of the Sub-Continent. Maulana Wasi Ahmed was a staunch protagonist of the fiqah-i-Hanifia, and because of this mathib he wnted to stress the teaching of Quran and Sunnah in the society. For this propose he trained his pupils, like Maulana Syed Mohammad Muhaddith Khachochvi, Maulana Amjad Ali Azami, Maulana Ziauddin Maddani, Prof. Syed Suleman Ashraf of the Muslim University of Aligarh, Maulana Abdul Qadir Lahori, Maulana Safdar Ali Peshawari, Maulana Khadim Hussain Ali Puri, Maulana Zafar-al-din Bihari, Maulana Abdul Aziz Khan Bijnori. Maulana Mohammad Ismail Mahmoodabadi, Maulana Abdul Ahad Pilibhiti and others justified these disciples of late and proved to be the main pillars of the religious education in the Sub-Continent. 18/Most of the students of Muhaddith Surti sought spititual gudience from Fadil-e- Barilvi, and he awarded them Khilafat in Qadri Order.

Summing up, Maulana Wasi Ahmed was unquestionably one of the most striking and epoch-making personalities amongst the religious circles of the Sub-Continent. He undoubtedly possessed the excellent qualities like intelligence, perseverance, integrity of character honesty, sincerity courage and patriotism. His desire for the promotion of Ilmi-i-Haddith and unshakable faith in the Sayings of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) were the main characteristics of his personality.

After untiring devotion to bring intellectual and religious revolution in the Muslim Society and remaining

attached to his students and companions. This great, eminent and the erudite of the Sub- Continent died at the age of eighty two on 14th April 1916(8th Jamadi-ul Awwal 1334 Hijri) and afterwards he became known all over the Muslim World as the "Muhaddith Surti" (R.A.).

Foot Notes:

1. This alleged saying of the Prophet is quoted widely, but it is not authentic. Sakhauri, Al-Maqasid-l Hasanah (Cairo, 1956), P.286.
2. Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi, Maktubat-i-Imam-i-Rabbani (Lucknow, 1913), PP.14-18, Epistle II.
3. See for detail, Tadhkirah-i-Hadrat Shah Waliullah, Manazir Ahsan Gilani (Karachi, 1965).
4. See for reference and detail, Ulema in Politics, Ashtiaq Hussain Qureshi, Chapter VIII (Karachi, 1974).
5. Surat, administrative headquarters, Surat districts, Gujarat state, West Central India, near the mouth of the Tapti River and the Gulf of Cambay Believed to have been founded by a Brahmin named Gopi, who built the Gopi Tank (Water reservoir) in 1516 and named the area suroypur or suroyopur, Surat became the name of the town in 1520. It was plundered by Muslims the 12th and 15th centuries; in1514 the Portuguese Traveler. Durte Barbosa described Surat as a leading port. It was burned by the Portuguese (1512 and 1530) and conquered by the Mughals (1573). Surat, therefore become the Emporium of India, Exporting cloth and gold.

   By the mid-9th Century Surat was decaued town of 80,000 Inhabitants, Surat district, bounded by Maharashtra state (East) and the Gulf of Combay (West) occupies an area of 2843 sq. mile (7,364 sq.k.m.). The New Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago, 1975), Vol. IX, P. 687.
6. Razvi, Mahmood Ahmed, Tadkirah-i-Ulema-i-All-i-Sunnat (Cawnpur, 1971), P. 258.
7. Ibid, P. 259.

8. Khan, Sir Syed Ahmed, Athar-al-Sanadid (Lucknow, 1876). P. Madrasa-i-Hussain Bakhsh was established in Hawaily Bakhtawar Khan by a Punjabi Sawdagar Hussain Bakhsh in A.D. 1268.
9. Madrasa-i-Faiz-i-Aam was established 1277 by a freedom frighter Maulana Inayat Ahmed of Kakori soon after his release from the detention of Indeman. Mohammad Ali Haider, Tadkirah-i- Kakori (Lucknow, 1927), P. 289.
10. Razvi, op.cit., P.259
11. Shah Hussain Gardaizi, Rijal-al-Sunnah (Karachi, 1978). P.20
12. Maulana Faiz Ahmad, Mehr-i-Muneer (Rawalpindi, 1973). P.812.
13. Razvi, op.cit., P.258.
14. Gardaizi, op.cit., P.21.
15. His published Works are:
    i. *Taliqat-I Sunnan Nisai* (Cawnpur, 1295 H.)
    ii. *Sarah Mani-ul-Athar* (Cawnpur, 1300 H.)
    iii. *Taliqat-I Shuruh-i-Arba-a Termizi* (Cawnpur, 1894).
    iv. *Ifadat-iHisni Hassin* (Patna, 1325 H.).
    v. *At-Taliq-al-Mujally* (Lucknow, 1316 H.).
    vi. *Kashaf-al-Ghimamah* (Pili Bhith, 1326 H.).
    vii. *Azhar-i-Shariat* (Pili Bhith, 1364 H.).
    viii. *Anfa-al-Shwahid* (Pili Bhith, 1331 H.)
    ix. *Jama-al-Shwahid* (Lucknow, 1298 H.)
16. Muhaddith Surti's Annotation on Allama Saddi-ud-din Kashghari's renound book Munyatul-Mussally was publish From Maktaba-i-Yusfi, Lucknow in the 1316H. He suggested The name of his annotation is At-Taliq-al-Mujally. The said Annotation recently republished from Maktaba-i-Qadria, Lahore.
17. Abdul Razzq-al-Makky-a;-Haider Abadi, Fatawa-al-Sunnah La- Aljam-al-Fitna (Baraily, 1314 H.) P.52.
18. For detailed study about the pupils of Muhaddith Surti see Tadhkirah-I Muhaddith Surti (Karachi, 1981).

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Anjuman Zia-e-Taiba was established in 2004/1425 Hijri. Its name has been attributed on the name of Khalifa-e-Aalahazrat Shaikh-ul-Arab wal-Ajam Qutb-e-Madina Shah Zia-ud-din Ahmed Madni Rahimahullah. It is one of the modern Islamic research associations.

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